

## Unit Four

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### Working Together

#### INTRODUCTION

The roles and services of voluntary agencies in emergency management will be successful only when agencies are willing and able to collaborate with one another and with other disaster relief organizations to accomplish common goals. Neither voluntary agencies nor the government, working alone, can help the American public mitigate against, prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters. Collaboration among all sectors of the emergency management community must begin during the mitigation and preparation phases and continue through response and recovery operations.

In this unit, you will learn about:

- ◆ The benefits of voluntary agency collaboration;
- ◆ Challenges to and strategies for effective voluntary agency collaboration; and
- ◆ Entities (e.g., National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, the Donations Collaboration Team) that foster government/voluntary agency collaboration throughout the emergency management cycle.

*“The local, State, and Federal government, voluntary agencies, and others involved in disasters are like individual sand bags. Alone they cannot stop the flood, but together they are like an impenetrable wall of safety and security.”*

*—Nancy Kelker, Winston-Salem/Forsyth County, North Carolina, Office of Emergency Management*

Voluntary agency collaboration is the process by which voluntary agencies make a formal and sustained commitment to work together on a common mission. Successful collaboration requires:

- A commitment to participate in shared decision making;
- The willingness to share information, resources, and tasks in the interest of a common goal;
- Respect for each other's mission and diversity; and
- A sense of community.



*A volunteer at a Salvation Army center in Hardin, Missouri, unloads health kits from Church World Service Disaster Response. In the background you can see comfort kits and cleaning supplies that were donated from the American Red Cross.*

## THE BENEFITS OF VOLUNTARY AGENCY COLLABORATION

Effective voluntary agency collaboration benefits both the providers and the recipients of disaster assistance by allowing services to be provided in the most effective manner possible while reducing duplication of benefits between the responding agencies. When collaboration is working well, expertise and resources are shared between voluntary agencies, the government, and private businesses. This collaboration among disaster relief organizations increases creativity, responsiveness, and the ability to draw on varied resources in order to assist individuals and families in their recovery from the disaster.



*After a tornado hit Cooksville, North Carolina, in the Spring of 1989, cooperation was the key to successful disaster response. The Salvation Army van and two American Red Cross vans were stocked by the Baptist mobile kitchen. The communication unit provided by the American Radio Relay League kept it all flowing smoothly.*

Here are some of the most important benefits of voluntary agency collaboration identified by experienced disaster service individuals.

- **Improved Service:** Collaboration yields more effective and efficient service to the impacted community.
- **Less Confusion:** Collaboration reduces the sense of chaos that accompanies a disaster.
- **Increased Understanding:** Collaboration helps organizations learn more about each other and their unique roles and responsibilities during disasters.
- **Improved Relationships:** Collaboration leads to better working relationships between local, State, and Federal Governments, voluntary agencies, private businesses, and the general public.
- **Reduced Fragmentation of Services:** Collaboration facilitates a holistic approach to emergency management and minimizes the likelihood that services will be provided in an ad hoc fashion.
- **Reduced Duplication of Services:** Many disaster relief organizations provide the same or similar services. However, when organizations coordinate their time and resources, more needs are met and fewer resources are wasted.

- **Expanded Resource Capability:** Collaboration allows more individuals and organizations to participate in the response and recovery effort, and expands the effective use of volunteers, expertise, equipment, and materials.
- **Opportunities for Continued Interaction:** When organizations begin coordinating early in the emergency management cycle, the established relationships encourage communication links for continued collaboration throughout the disaster relief process.

- **Enhanced Problem-Solving:** Collaboration allows for more effective problem-solving through open communication and the sharing of ideas.

*“Networking determines the effectiveness of your response. Build sound relationships and don't be afraid to ask. You may be surprised with the response in the time of need.”*

— Jim Morsch, Nazarene Disaster Response

- **Collaborating in the Response Phase**  
Within fifteen minutes after the bombing of the AP Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, the Oklahoma City voluntary agency community responded. The Salvation Army provided mass care via five mobile disaster canteens. Working in collaboration with the Salvation Army, the American Red Cross responded immediately, providing food, water, snacks, and blankets at the disaster site. It also mobilized a mental health team to respond to the crisis and opened two shelters north of the city to accommodate hundreds of residents of a nearby damaged apartment building.

## STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL VOLUNTARY AGENCY COLLABORATION

Individuals and organizations involved in emergency management often experience differences that create challenges for successful collaboration. Although these differences bring unique strengths and viewpoints to disaster operations, it is critical that disaster relief organizations understand and address these differences to ensure effective coordination. Some common challenges to and possible strategies for effective voluntary agency collaboration are presented in the following table.

*“Voluntary agencies provide great comfort to people in their most desperate times. City managers and public safety workers need to nurture a strong partnership with their local voluntary agencies.”*

— *Connie Sprynczynatyk, Director of the League of Cities, North Dakota*

Collaboration Challenges	Strategies for Successful Collaboration
<b>Goals:</b> Organizations involved in disaster relief operations may have different goals and priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn about and respect each other's goals, priorities, and differences.</li> <li>• Reach agreement on a common mission for the disaster relief operation.</li> <li>• Align goals and priorities so disaster relief organizations work toward the common mission.</li> </ul>
<b>Roles and Services:</b> There may be uncertainty about the roles and services provided by voluntary agencies, government organizations, and private-sector businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet and communicate regularly about each other's roles and services before, during, and after disasters.</li> <li>• Maintain a central point of contact in your organization who can educate others about your roles and services.</li> <li>• Distribute written information about your organization's mission, roles, and functions.</li> <li>• Attend each other's conferences and training exercises.</li> <li>• Take advantage of technological communication systems (e.g., e-mail, Internet).</li> </ul>
<b>Lack of Disaster Planning:</b> Sometimes, organizations don't try to coordinate until after disaster strikes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet on a regular basis before disaster strikes.</li> <li>• Develop working relationships with other disaster relief organizations before disasters.</li> <li>• Develop written plans of operation specifying each organization's role and responsibilities during disaster.</li> <li>• Practice exercising these plans of operation.</li> </ul>

Collaboration Challenges	Strategies for Successful Collaboration
<b>Organizational Culture:</b> Ways of doing business may differ among voluntary agencies and other organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn about each other's differences and attempt to identify and overcome biases.</li> <li>• Show respect for different cultures.</li> <li>• Adopt a give and take attitude.</li> <li>• Develop formal coalitions such as Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOADs) at the local, county, and State levels.</li> </ul>
<b>Experience:</b> Experienced and inexperienced organizations are expected to collaborate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experienced organizations should welcome and help those organizations with less experience.</li> <li>• Experienced organizations should recognize and value creative ideas that new organizations may contribute.</li> </ul>
<b>Location of Operations:</b> Frequently, there is too much physical distance between the location of government organizations and voluntary agencies on disasters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a point of contact in each organization to serve as a primary cross communicator.</li> <li>• Have representatives at each other's sites.</li> <li>• Attend each other's meetings and briefings.</li> <li>• Use the telephone and e-mail to communicate regularly.</li> </ul>
<b>Changes in Personnel:</b> Human resources are very fluid on disaster operations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate with other organizations about changes in your organization's personnel.</li> <li>• Be patient with new people and help bring them up to speed.</li> <li>• Share your lessons learned with new people to avoid repetition of mistakes.</li> </ul>

Over the years, several different organizations, committees, and positions have been created to help voluntary agencies address the challenges mentioned above, and to coordinate their roles and services to provide more effective service to disaster victims. These coordinating entities include the following and are discussed in the remainder of this unit.

- National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD)
- State and Local Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)
- FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaison
- Resources Coordination Committee/Unmet Needs Committee
- Donations Coordination Team (DCT)

## NATIONAL VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN DISASTER (NVOAD)

### *NVOAD's Beginning*

NVOAD is a consortium of recognized national voluntary organizations active in disaster relief. NVOAD was created in direct response to the challenges of meeting the needs of persons overtaken by disaster. After Hurricane Camille in 1969, it became clear that voluntary agencies were responding to the needs of disaster victims in a fragmented, uncoordinated manner. As a result, the following problems existed:

- Disaster victims received help in haphazard ways.
- Unnecessary duplication of effort often occurred while, at the same time, some needs were not being met at all.
- Individuals interested in volunteering became frustrated by the variety of organizations in some areas of service and the lack of opportunities to serve other needs.
- There was limited training for interested volunteers.
- Information sources on services during disasters was woefully inadequate.
- Communication between voluntary agencies was very limited and the coordination of services was negligible.

In response to these problems, representatives from voluntary agencies began to meet on a regular basis to share their respective activities, concerns, and frustrations in disaster response. On July 15, 1970, representatives from seven voluntary agencies came together in Washington, D.C., to form NVOAD. The voluntary agencies represented at this first meeting were:

- The American Red Cross;
- Christian Reformed World Relief Committee;
- Mennonite Disaster Service;
- National Catholic Disaster Relief Committee;
- Seventh Day Adventists;
- Society of St. Vincent De Paul; and

- Southern Baptist Disaster Relief.



NVOAD grew rapidly. By its tenth anniversary, there were 21 member agencies. Following major disasters in the early 1990's, six new member agencies were accepted. At present, NVOAD is comprised of more than 30 national voluntary agencies providing a wide array of disaster relief services.

### **NVOAD's Mission**

The mission of NVOAD is to foster more effective service to people affected by disasters. NVOAD, itself, does not deliver disaster response and recovery services. NVOAD coordinates planning efforts by many voluntary organizations responding to disaster. Member organizations provide more effective service and less duplication by getting together before disasters strike. Once disasters occur, NVOAD or an affiliated state VOAD encourages members and other voluntary agencies to convene on site. This cooperative effort has proven to be the most effective way for a wide variety of volunteers and organizations to work together in a crisis.

*"I define NVOAD as a collection of members who bring special skills to the table to do disaster response and recovery. At that table, members can look at how they work together cooperatively to best serve disaster survivors."*

*— Donna Derr, Church World Service Disaster Response*

NVOAD's mission is based on four core values.

1. **Cooperation:** Voluntary agencies need and rely on each other. No one member organization of NVOAD has all the answers for all the challenges faced during disasters. Voluntary agencies need to treat each other as partners.
2. **Communication:** NVOAD member organizations must share information regularly about their capacities, accomplishments, limitations, and commitments. Members must develop and maintain effective channels for sharing this information, listen carefully to each other, and deal openly with concerns.
3. **Coordination:** Member organizations must commit to working together, not competitively, toward the goal of effective service to disaster victims. Through careful planning and preparation, NVOAD helps its member organizations behave in a coordinated fashion in time of disaster.
4. **Collaboration:** Member organizations must dedicate themselves to working together to achieve specific goals and to undertake specific projects at disaster sites. They must form partnerships during the disaster response.

NVOAD accomplishes its mission in several ways.

- **Meetings:** Meetings allow member organizations to get to know each other and each other's work. They also lay the foundation for a coordinated response in times of disaster. NVOAD convenes an annual meeting and other meetings throughout the year, as needed. NVOAD also holds ongoing electronic meetings through their e-mail system offering a forum for member interchange and discussing board and committee business.
- **Education:** NVOAD's member organizations provide disaster-related training, often across organizational lines, to increase awareness and preparedness in each organization.
- **Outreach:** NVOAD encourages the formation of State and substate VOADs, and it gives prospective VOADs guidance on how to get themselves organized.
- **Publications:** NVOAD publishes a quarterly newsletter, a directory of member organizations, and other materials as appropriate. Most of these materials are available on the NVOAD web site: **[www.nvoad.org](http://www.nvoad.org)**. In addition, a video on NVOAD called "It's About Time" is available.
- **Representation of Disaster-Related Concerns to the Government:** NVOAD maintains a relationship with FEMA through a signed Memorandum of Understanding. NVOAD also participates in Federal, State, and local emergency management planning.
- **Mitigation:** NVOAD encourages its member organizations to participate in mitigation efforts to reduce the impact of disasters.

### ***NVOAD Leadership***

NVOAD is led by a Board of Directors, which acts on behalf of the general membership. This Board meets at least twice a year in addition to the annual meeting. The Board's meetings are open to all NVOAD members.

The Board of Directors consists of nine persons elected by the membership for three-year terms. One-third of the Board is elected annually. Each Board member may serve two consecutive three-year terms.

The Board elects a President, Vice President, and Treasurer. The Board is staffed by an Executive Secretary. Below is a brief description of each NVOAD officer's role.

- **President:** Provides leadership for NVOAD; convenes the annual meeting; presides at meetings; acts as a spokesperson and representative; delegates tasks.
- **Vice President:** Acts on behalf of the President in his or her absence; monitors relationships with member organizations for adherence to NVOAD's principles of membership.
- **Treasurer:** Maintains all of NVOAD's financial accounts and records.
- **Executive Secretary:** Keeps minutes of all meetings; maintains organizational records and correspondence; handles the day-to-day management of the organization; provides support and coordination for all levels of the organization.

In conjunction with the Board of Directors and NVOAD officers, member organizations provide many support services and resources that are essential to NVOAD's success. Some of these services include writing and printing the newsletter and producing videos.

### ***NVOAD's Relationship with FEMA***

When NVOAD first organized in 1970, national disaster programs were spread among several Federal agencies. In the late 1970's, FEMA was established to consolidate these different agencies.

In October 1979, John Macy, Jr., Director of FEMA, met with the NVOAD membership. In response to this meeting, NVOAD appointed a committee to work closely with Mr. Macy on an ongoing basis.

The relationship has grown to the point that FEMA currently participates actively in NVOAD Board meetings, NVOAD committee meetings, the NVOAD Annual Meeting, and the Annual VOAD Leadership Conference. The VOAD Leadership Conference, in particular, provides FEMA an extraordinary opportunity to meet with and develop a strong rapport with local and State-level VOADs throughout the country. It is important to have a steady planning process at the local level that integrates the roles of the voluntary agencies and community-based organizations with the role of government. An effective disaster response and recovery clearly depends on a strong investment in preparedness and mitigation.

FEMA believes it is extremely important to develop strong working relationships between government emergency management at all levels and the voluntary agencies at all levels. At the national level, NVOAD offers a unique forum for communication between the many active voluntary agencies on a wide number of issues. At the regional level, FEMA participates in State VOAD activities and encourages close working relationships.

While FEMA continues to maintain its Memoranda of Understandings (MOUs) with individual voluntary agencies and works closely with NVOAD member organizations individually, FEMA and NVOAD developed a formal MOU in 1997. This FEMA-NVOAD MOU provides a framework within which FEMA and NVOAD will cooperate in disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

By signing this document, **FEMA** agreed to:

- Contribute to the public awareness of NVOAD by:
  - Encouraging State emergency management agencies to act collaboratively with their VOAD counterparts;
  - Encouraging non-member VOADs to seek affiliation with NVOAD and State and sub-state VOADs; and
  - Inviting a NVOAD representative to participate in the Joint Information Center on relief operations, as appropriate.
- Contribute to the training of NVOAD and VOAD members by sharing information concerning existing FEMA and State courses and cooperating in the development of new courses;
- Assist NVOAD in helping its members contribute to disaster mitigation by identifying training and financial resources that may be available to voluntary agencies; and
- Assist NVOAD in the development of a partnership between its members and the business community.

In this Memorandum of Understanding, **NVOAD** agreed to:

- Lead and encourage the mitigation of natural hazard risks through outreach, education, and local community involvement both before and after disasters occur;
- Encourage linkages between governments, the business community, and State and sub-state VOADs, which enhance preparedness for coordinated future relief efforts;
- Assist FEMA when a major disaster or emergency is declared by convening a meeting of the voluntary sector to coordinate an effective response and recovery;
- Encourage its members to regularly share information about field disaster response and recovery activities with FEMA regional offices prior to and following disaster declarations by the Federal government; and
- Disseminate FEMA emergency management information through its membership.

## STATE AND LOCAL VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS ACTIVE IN DISASTER (VOAD)

### *The VOAD Movement*

Not long after the development of NVOAD, State and regional VOAD organizations were created to ensure an effective response to disasters at the State and local levels. The first State VOAD was formed in 1975. The VOAD movement initially grew without much order and without official sanction or direction from NVOAD. However, in 1988 NVOAD developed formal procedures for chartering State and local VOAD members. At this time, there are chartered State VOAD organizations in almost all the U.S. states and territories, and there are a growing number of local VOADs.

Membership by State and local VOADs in NVOAD fosters good will and cooperation among as many disaster response organizations as possible. When State and local VOADs become part of the national effort, they benefit by:

- Coordinating their work with that of NVOAD by participating in the Annual VOAD Leadership Conference and becoming part of the information-sharing network of disaster response professionals and volunteers;
- Gaining clarity regarding disaster-related issues and Federal, State, and local Government programs;
- Participating with NVOAD in the development and sponsorship of State and local training programs; and
- Receiving regular leadership guidance, the newsletter, and access to the electronic forums.

## VOAD Activities

The main activities of VOAD fall into four categories.

1. **Planning:** VOADs should have a plan that identifies the primary resources of their member organizations and the roles members will fill in time of disaster. For example, "Group A will handle all clothing donations, Groups B-D will provide emergency food and shelter, Group E will supply volunteers for clean-up but cannot purchase any materials, and Group F will donate cash assistance." The plan should also specify the role of the VOAD in time of disaster.
 

*"It's critical that State VOADs meet before disasters to discuss ways to avoid duplication and services - otherwise, needs are not met."*

— Glenn Gress, American Red Cross
2. **Training:** VOADs should sponsor or facilitate the training of members and their organizations for effective activity in all phases of disaster response.
3. **Convening:** When a disaster occurs in their area, VOADs should convene their members to share information concerning the disaster and their plans for response. State and local VOADs should work together on larger disasters.
4. **Partnering:** VOADs should enter partnerships with government emergency management agencies to facilitate communication and coordination.

*See Appendix C for detailed steps on developing a VOAD.*

***Louisiana Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)***

Founded in January 1984, Louisiana VOAD is an umbrella organization of not-for-profit organizations that are active in disaster service. Each member organization maintains its own autonomy while coordinating closely with each other through Louisiana VOAD. Louisiana VOAD's purpose is to bring together the volunteer organizations and to encourage more effective disaster response through cooperation, coordination, communication, education, and convening mechanisms.

Louisiana VOAD seeks to ensure the availability of needed services during disasters in a timely manner, with minimal duplication of services, and to encourage uniform, impartial provision of those services.

Some notable accomplishments of Louisiana VOAD include the following.

- Louisiana VOAD has established a close working relationship with the Louisiana Office of Emergency Preparedness. It participates in statewide disaster drills and holds a seat in the state command center during actual disasters.
- Louisiana VOAD has been especially effective in donations management coordination and one of its member organization, Adventist Community Services, has contracted with the state to manage unsolicited donated goods.
- Louisiana VOAD has played an important role in the formation and support of local Resource Coordination Committees/Unmet Needs Committees following disasters.
- Louisiana VOAD conducts an annual training conference with attendees from member agencies as well as state and local government agencies and interfaith organizations involved in disaster response.

***Virginia Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)***

The Virginia VOAD is committed to providing effective service to all persons affected by disasters. At its inception, Virginia VOAD decided to be proactive in disaster response while recognizing and maintaining the individuality and unique identity of its member organizations. All major church groups, the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, food banks, the Virginia Jaycees, and related government agencies are members of Virginia VOAD. Thus, the entire commonwealth is represented.

Virginia VOAD has established and maintained a strong working relationship with the Virginia Department of Emergency Services and has an assigned desk in the Virginia Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Operating from the EOC, the Virginia VOAD representative is able to access the resources of member organizations in response to specific needs both during the immediate crisis and into the recovery phase. For example, during the 1998 winter storms in Virginia, several member organizations were contacted concerning specific needs. In one case, a food bank provided direct assistance while another member had financial assistance available if needed.



### ***Oklahoma Voluntary Organizations Active In Disaster (VOAD)***

Following the April 19, 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, the Oklahoma Department of Civil Emergency Management (ODCEM) evaluated the effectiveness of the State's disaster response efforts. From this evaluation study, ODCEM determined that:

- Handling unsolicited donated goods and spontaneous volunteers was critical during disasters.
- Local jurisdictions required training, guidance, and leadership on how to work more effectively with the Oklahoma Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (OKVOAD).

Based on these findings, it was decided that a dedicated ODCEM staff position for human services was needed. This position was quickly filled with a new Human Services Coordinator who was given the primary responsibility of forging a closer relationship with OKVOAD. This individual was also tasked with establishing a Donations Management program, acting as a liaison between the VOAD's and the government, and assisting with training the local jurisdictions on working with the OKVOAD. During this time, an Individual Assistance Officer was also established at the State office. Through these positions, the State is better equipped to support the OKVOAD. Some specific activities that have occurred since the creations of these positions include the following.

- The Human Services Coordinator is now the Executive Secretary to the OKVOAD—a non-voting position who sends out notices of meeting, meeting minutes, and any other information needed.
- The Human Services Coordinator and the Individual Assistance Officer arrange free training workshops at each VOAD meeting.
- The State developed and maintains on an on-going basis a comprehensive OKVOAD directory for all of its members.
- A modified Donations Management system was developed collaboratively with the State and OKVOAD that ensures coordination between the VOADs and the State emergency management systems.
- Working procedures between the State and OKVOAD are evaluated at each VOAD meeting and improved upon as necessary.

***Washington Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)***

Founded in 1988, Washington VOAD is an organization comprised of voluntary agencies as well as other interested groups and individuals in the State of Washington who are dedicated to disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. The members of Washington VOAD support each other through collaborative efforts to maximize available resources and facilitate the most rapid, effective, efficient, and appropriate recovery for disaster survivors and their respective communities.

Since its inception, Washington VOAD has arranged monthly meetings of its member organizations, including the State Department of Emergency Management and FEMA. Meetings each month give the member organizations an opportunity to build relationships and respect for each other, which has resulted in a high level of harmony and support during disaster response efforts. Washington VOAD also serves as an ongoing Resource Coordination Committee/Unmet Needs Committee. Both FEMA Region X and the Washington Department of Emergency Management refer cases that have extended beyond their capacity to this committee.

A few examples of the cooperative, collaborative relationships that Washington VOAD has developed are presented below.

One week prior to Christmas 1995, following extensive flooding and a severe windstorm, representatives from FEMA, the Washington Department of Emergency Management, the American Red Cross, and Washington VOAD met to review cases needing emergency attention. Washington VOAD members divided the work and prior to Christmas Day all emergency unmet needs had been addressed.

When flash floods in the spring of 1988 impacted several Eastern Washington counties, there was a need to rebuild a bridge that had been washed away. This need was referred to Washington VOAD by the Washington Department of Emergency Management. Washington VOAD members, in collaboration with volunteers from United Methodist Committee on Relief, made telephone calls, conducted an on-site assessment of the bridge, and set in motion a plan to rebuild the bridge.

When Seattle was selected by FEMA as a model for its Project Impact mitigation study, Washington VOAD became a member of the planning committee. Washington VOAD has agreed to provide the volunteer resources of its member organizations to assist families in retrofitting their homes, thereby reducing severe losses in the event of an earthquake.

***Missouri Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD)***

The Midwest Floods of 1993 produced many long-term improvements for Missouri VOAD. Voluntary agencies, in particular, increased in stature in the emergency management community. What follows are some examples of cooperation and accomplishments from the Midwest Floods.

- The Disaster Recovery Partnership was formed to improve the delivery of disaster services to individuals. This Partnership is an organization, appointed by the Governor, that is comprised of State, Federal, private, and not-for-profit agencies that have a mandate to serve disaster victims. This Partnership has created unprecedented levels of cooperation between government and non-governmental agencies.
- The Disaster Recovery Partnership promoted the creation of a Statewide Voluntary Agency Coordinator within the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA).
- Missouri VOAD is now scheduling quarterly meetings in conjunction with SEMA training courses to help defray the cost of travel for those who attend.
- The importance of having Voluntary Agency Liaisons in the State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) was demonstrated during the Midwest Floods. The Voluntary Agency Liaison provided information to agencies about when and where flooding was occurring. Missouri VOAD created a formal plan to have representation and inter-agency coordination at the State EOC. This plan is currently being tested and analyzed.
- Missouri VOAD, together with SEMA, sponsored a terrorism exercise called VOEX '97 that brought together government and private agencies to work on human service issues such as mass care, crisis counseling, special needs populations, and long-term recovery issues.

## **FEMA VOLUNTARY AGENCY LIAISON**

### ***Purpose of the Voluntary Agency Liaison***

FEMA provides a Voluntary Agency Liaison to the ten FEMA regional offices, the Pacific Area office, the Caribbean Area office, and the Emergency Management Institute. The primary purpose of the FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaison is to foster a strong rapport between all of the voluntary agencies and the FEMA regional offices.

The Voluntary Agency Liaison shares information with voluntary agencies about FEMA and other Federal Agency disaster programs and policies, and strives to build a high level of trust at the regional level. In addition, the Voluntary Agency Liaison provides guidance to the FEMA offices on the role of the voluntary agencies in the region and serves as the principal point of contact for the voluntary agencies. One of the most critical preparedness roles that the Voluntary Agency Liaison serves is providing guidance and encouragement in the development of the State and local VOADs. Having a broad-based, viable, and active State or local VOAD in the preparedness period makes an extraordinary difference in the disaster response and recovery periods.

### ***Disaster Operation Activities of the Voluntary Agency Liaison***

Listed below are some of the specific activities that a Voluntary Agency Liaison carries out on a disaster operation.

- Advises the voluntary sector about the Federal/State Coordination Meeting, the Voluntary Agency Coordination Meeting, and essential information concerning Disaster Field Office (DFO) operations, points of contact, and reporting requirements.
- Makes arrangements for work space in the DFO for organizations such as the American Red Cross and others to better coordinate activities or for those carrying out a service on behalf of the Federal Government.
- Establishes an information exchange via telephone, facsimile, or other method.
- Coordinates with other functions such as the Public Information Officer, Community Relations, Congressional Relations, Emergency Support Function (ESF) #5, and the State to assure that voluntary relief activities are understood.
- Coordinates with the Mitigation Branch to assure that voluntary building and repair agencies are aware of local flood plain management and mitigation issues in the affected areas.
- Establishes a system to handle emergency referrals to the voluntary sector on a 24-hour basis.

- Provides for continued support, technical assistance, and liaison following the closure of the DFO.

### ***The Emergency Management Institute (EMI) Voluntary Agency Liaison***

Listed below are responsibilities that are specific to the Voluntary Agency Liaison assigned to EMI in Emmitsburg, Maryland.

- Provide advice and assistance to FEMA in developing training activities for State and local officials on using community resources and other voluntary and private sector services.
- Provide advice and guidance to EMI staff on voluntary agency resources and services in support of State and local government emergency management.
- Maintain a close working relationship with voluntary agencies and other Voluntary Agency Liaisons to use their expertise with regard to training issues.

## THE DONATIONS COORDINATION TEAM

### ***Background: The National Donations Management Strategy***

The concept of the Donations Coordination Team developed from the National Donations Management Strategy, adopted by the National Donations Steering Committee in 1993. This steering committee, which was convened by FEMA, included representatives from local and State emergency management, voluntary agencies, and Federal agencies such as the Department of Defense, the Department of Transportation, General Services Administration, and the Department of State.

The National Donations Management Strategy outlines the basic process for managing donated goods and services during a disaster. Prior to the introduction of this strategy, most major disasters experienced “the disaster after the disaster.” A chronic problem was the disaster area becoming clogged with goods that were unneeded, inappropriate, or poorly labeled and packaged. Offers made with the best intentions often added to and prolonged the suffering of disaster victims by jamming distribution channels and overwhelming voluntary agencies. The National Donations Management Strategy is based on the following assumptions about donations management.

- Donations activities begin before a Federal declaration.
- It is only unsolicited goods and unaffiliated volunteers that are of concern.
- Designated goods may be affected by State policies in disasters when roads and safety are impacted.
- State and local governments are ultimately in charge of managing unsolicited goods and unaffiliated volunteers though a close working relationship with voluntary agencies is necessary.
- The Federal government and NVOAD are in supportive roles.
- The full use of voluntary agencies and community-based organizations in the donations management process is essential.
- Flexibility in the donations management process is necessary; there is no single way to manage unsolicited goods and services.
- A united and cooperative approach is necessary; no single agency can handle unsolicited goods and services.
- Cash to voluntary agencies is the preferred donation.
- Information management is essential for a successful operation.

The National Donations Management Strategy makes the best possible use of the compassionate, altruistic instincts of Americans, while at the same time providing the level of information and containment necessary to emergency managers. This strategy illustrates the kind of creative problem-solving that can result from collaborative efforts between the government and voluntary agencies.

### ***A Coordinated Donations Management Effort***

The Illinois State Donations Coordination Center, established during the 1993 Midwest Floods, continues to be one of the best examples of effective management of unsolicited goods and unaffiliated volunteers in a large-scale disaster. The key to success in this operation was the high level of State cooperation with the voluntary agencies and with FEMA. The decisive and proactive State emergency management leadership provided the space for the Donations Coordination Team (DCT). The State assisted with direct coordination of the affected local jurisdictions for situation assessment information including the critical need for additional sandbaggers. In addition, the State assisted the coordination efforts with clear and timely press releases and with the communications and personnel to run the phone bank.

The voluntary agencies provided representatives who had their respective agencies' authority to accept or decline the offers coming into the phone bank. The State VOAD Chairperson was chosen to co-lead the DCT along with the State emergency management. A very active interagency donations "intelligence" component was kept busy tracking down reports of large-scale uncoordinated collection drives around the country and offering coordination support. Key organizations including Second Harvest National Network of Food Banks, Adventist Community Services, the Salvation Army, the American Red Cross, and Southern Baptist Disaster Relief helped to manage the activities of the DCT. Several other organizations participated in the regular DCT meetings that were held to discuss the progress of the efforts and problems.

All elements of the 10-point National Donations Management Strategy were fully implemented in the Illinois operation. As a result, the public made enormous contributions of in-kind donations that made a positive difference in the disaster response and recovery efforts instead of being wasted and counter-productive as in the past.

## ***A Team Approach to Donations Management***

In many disasters, it is necessary for voluntary agencies, community-based organizations, the government, and others to work together to address the incoming flow of unsolicited donated goods and unaffiliated volunteers. In such times, a team approach has proven to be the most effective way for managing donations. This team is often called the Donations Coordination Team (DCT).

The mission of the Donations Coordination Team, comprised of voluntary agencies and government representatives, is strictly to manage unsolicited donated goods and spontaneous volunteers coming into the disaster area. This mission is based on the premise that the public's involvement and support of voluntary agencies with in-kind and cash donations is critical for a steady recovery from the disaster.

Emergency managers, both in the voluntary agency sector and the government, must be prepared to work with the public to ensure that their contributions meet the affected community's needs. Otherwise, unsolicited goods may be counterproductive causing considerable waste of warehouse space, labor, and other local resources.

The Donations Coordination Team assembles immediately after a disaster and establishes a framework for the donations management operation. The team disseminates information to the general public on how it can coordinate offers of goods and services before sending them into the disaster area. The Donations Coordination Team focuses primarily on the disaster response phase by channeling donated resources into the disaster area in an organized fashion. This allows voluntary agencies and local governments to provide the most effective emergency assistance to disaster victims.

*“In the Great Kentucky Flood of 1997, we had donated goods from businesses being stored in Food Pantry Warehouses being manned by volunteers from the Adventist Community Services and the United Methodist Committee on Relief. Supplies from these warehouses were being used by the Baptists to fix meals for American Red Cross shelters. That's cooperation and coordination.”*

*— David Boyer, Kentucky Division of  
Emergency Services*

*“Without the contribution of the voluntary organizations, the transportation of donated goods would quickly deteriorate into chaos, wasting precious resources and robbing victims of the supplies they desperately need for recovery.”*

*— John Porco, Deputy Director of the Office of  
Emergency Transportation, Department of  
Transportation*



***The Structure of the Donations Coordination Team***

The Donations Coordination Team is managed by the State Donations Coordinator and can be co-managed by a leading representative from a voluntary agency in the State. The team is composed of any responsible organization, governmental or non-governmental, that has a role in the donations management. Typically, the Donations Coordination Team includes:

- The State Donations Coordinator;
- The President of the State VOAD;
- Representatives from the State VOAD;
- Representatives from regional and national voluntary agencies;
- FEMA representatives;
- Representatives from the State Government for logistics, public information, communications, finance, transportation, etc.; and
- Representatives from key local emergency management agencies.
- Major community-based organizations.

The Donations Coordination Team may also include representatives from local businesses and others who desire to be more involved in donations management.

### ***Tasks of the Donations Coordination Team***

Listed below are some of the basic tasks of the Donations Coordination Team in managing unsolicited goods and services during a disaster operation.

- Ensure that there is an overall strategic logistics plan in place for receiving and managing unsolicited goods. This is critical to minimize the likelihood that unsolicited goods will interfere with emergency response operations in the disaster area.
- Ensure that all the “right players are at the table” from the start. This may include any individual or group who is providing disaster services to the community and is concerned about the management of unsolicited goods and services.
- Reach consensus about what types of goods and services are needed in the community and forward this information to the public.
- Establish a Donations Coordination Center complete with a phone bank, if necessary. Voluntary agency toll free telephone numbers should be fully used before a central toll free number is established. However, in large-scale disasters most donations hotlines become overwhelmed quickly and a central toll free number becomes necessary.
- Process the offers that come into the Donations Coordination Center in a timely and effective manner. This is best accomplished by ensuring that offers are sorted and that experienced voluntary agency representatives have the opportunity to negotiate with the donor about the offer. Shipping and receiving details should also be discussed with the potential donor and interested recipient.
- Strive to maintain a harmonious working relationship with all involved parties including voluntary organizations, government agencies, donors, media, politicians, community-based organizations, and others. This task should be handled with the experienced support of a Voluntary Agency Liaison, Public Information Officer, Congressional Liaison Officer, and Logistics staff members.



*The Oklahoma State Donations Coordination Center provided much needed space for voluntary agencies to meet with their State and local counterparts to discuss donations coordination issues throughout the intensive response period following the Oklahoma City Bombing. Some 5,000 calls were taken by the State-FEMA donations phone bank alone.*

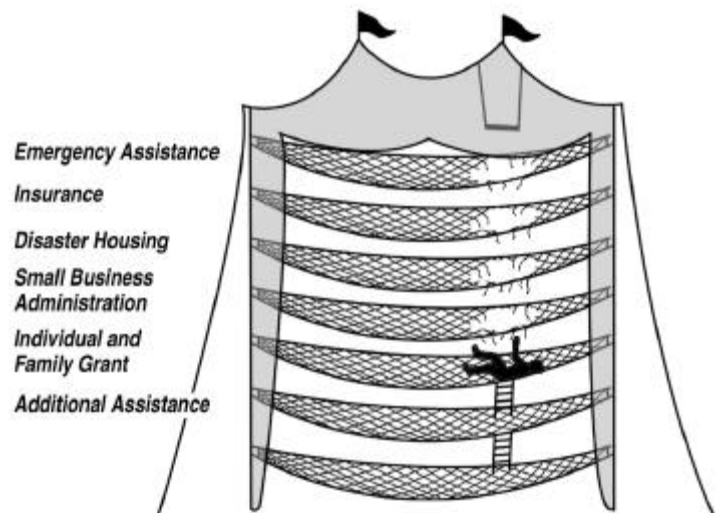
## THE RESOURCE COORDINATION COMMITTEE/UNMET NEEDS COMMITTEE

### *Purpose of the Committee*

In the sequence of delivery of disaster relief assistance, voluntary agencies and the local government are the first on the scene to provide emergency assistance to meet basic health and safety needs. These efforts are quickly supplemented with the support of the next level of government and national voluntary agency offices. After the immediate relief is underway, disaster victims can begin calling FEMA's

Teleregistration Center to apply for Federal disaster assistance. At this point, a determination is made as to what type of Federal assistance should be provided based on the individual's application and a housing inspection. The different types of Federal assistance may include a disaster relief loan from the Small Business Administration, housing assistance from FEMA, or an individual and family grant from the State Government.

### *Sequence of Delivery of Services*



Even after an individual has received disaster relief assistance from the government, there may still be unmet needs. At this juncture, the voluntary agencies and community-based organizations again play a critical role in meeting these unmet needs. The Resource Coordination Committee/Unmet Needs Committee provides for the development of a coordinating body of voluntary agencies and community-based organizations to address the long-term needs of individual families that have not been met by local, State, Federal or voluntary agency assistance.

### *Leadership and Structure of the Committee*

When possible, existing coordinating individuals or groups in the local community, such as the FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaison, the American Red Cross Voluntary Liaison, or local VOAD or interfaith organizations are the starting point for the Committee. Local leadership is essential from the beginning so that there is a true sense of ownership for the process and a higher chance of sustainability of the committee.

The Resource Coordination Committee/Unmet Needs Committee is composed of representatives from different disaster service agencies, including:

- VOAD members;
- Other disaster relief agencies;
- Community service organizations;
- Civic clubs and fraternal organizations;
- Local businesses;
- Interfaith organizations and religious groups; and
- FEMA and/or State representatives.

Any agency that is committed to the long-term recovery of individuals and families and has resources to share may sit on the Committee. However, agency representatives must have decision-making authority for their organizations. An objective, neutral coordinator facilitates the Committee's activities. During the recovery period, this coordinator convenes and facilitates regular meetings during which information about community resources is shared.

### ***Benefits of the Committee***

During the recovery phase, the Resource Coordination Committee/Unmet Needs Committee helps voluntary agencies coordinate their services and provide the most effective relief to disaster victims because it:

- Expands each agency's opportunity to assist survivors whom they might not have encountered otherwise;
- Fosters the best and most extensive use of each agency's services and resources;
- Allows agencies to share information about cases they are serving and avoid duplicating benefits;
- Provides a system for future interaction; and
- Affords the opportunity for non-traditional and other community-based organizations to participate in the recovery effort.

*“When voluntary agencies get together, compare notes, and start to learn about each other, they can, instead of competing, say where are the gaps in service and how can we fill them.”*

*— Michael Bruinooge, Christian Reformed  
World Relief Committee*

Disaster victims benefit from this Committee because it allows them to have access to all agencies simultaneously and to take advantage of the collective problem solving skills of experienced case managers.

### ***Case Consideration***

Families with disaster-related needs that have not been met through personal, local, State, Federal, or voluntary agency resources may request consideration for assistance by applying through a participating agency. Agencies may bring cases directly to the Committee if they are unable to meet client needs through their own

#### ***A Collaborative Effort in Addressing Unmet Needs***

In the aftermath of Hurricane Fran (1996), many mobility-impaired individuals had the wheel chair ramps leading to their homes either severely damaged or destroyed by the storm. The State approached the FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaison to see if the voluntary agencies could provide some assistance with this very special unmet need. The FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaison shared this unmet need at the next meeting of the voluntary agency community. After the meeting, the American Red Cross, Mennonite Disaster Services, the Center for Independent Living, and the State came together and developed the following plan for addressing this unmet need.

- The American Red Cross reviewed the case of each individual requesting ramp repair or rebuilding. If eligible, the American Red Cross provided funding for the materials needed to repair or rebuild the wheelchair ramp.
- United Methodist Committee on Relief, Adventist Community Services, and Mennonite Disaster Services divided the State into sections, each taking responsibility for fielding volunteer teams to repair and rebuild the wheelchair ramps.
- The Center for Independent Living provided blue prints for the ramps.
- The State representative approached a local business and asked for a building supply donation.

As a result of this collaboration, 25 wheelchair ramps were repaired or rebuilt at no expense to the local, State, or Federal Government.

resources. The Committee will review and, if possible, develop a recovery plan to meet the needs of each case that is brought forward. All cases presented to the Committee must be accompanied by a release of confidentiality signed by the client so that the case information may be shared.

## PROJECT IMPACT

### *Goal of Project Impact*

The goal of Project Impact, launched by FEMA in 1997, is to reduce the personal and economic costs of disasters by bringing together community leaders, citizens, and businesses to prepare for and protect themselves against the ravages of nature. Voluntary agencies have unique roles they can play in the growing national disaster mitigation movement and in Project Impact in particular.

Some basic roles voluntary agencies can play include the following.

1. Host public education forums on the importance of prevention.
2. Foster a dialogue with local government and the private sector.
3. Adopt a community and help it protect its homes.
4. Take steps to integrate and streamline your disaster relief and recovery activities.

### *Project Impact Phases*

The four phases of Project Impact include the following.

- I. ***Building Community Partnerships:*** This first phase is based on the concept that we can accomplish more as a group than as individuals. You can help by identifying and recruiting Project Impact partners in your community. For the greatest chance of success, the community partnership group should reflect all sectors: local government leaders, civic and volunteer groups, businesses and individual citizens.
- II. ***Assessing Risks:*** Once Project Impact partners have been recruited, the first order of business is to examine the community's risks for natural disasters. Then, partners must assess the community's vulnerability to those risks.
- III. ***Prioritizing Needs:*** Next, the Project Impact partners should take a close look at the specific buildings and systems that are most susceptible to risk. From this one can target the appropriate resources and prioritize the actions necessary to reduce the impact and aftermath of future disasters.
- IV. ***Building Support and Communicating What You Are Doing:*** It is important to keep the entire community focused on the objectives of Project Impact. It is also critical to provide on-going opportunities for additional involvement and support by updating citizens and businesses about what the Project Impact partners are doing and how the community is benefiting from these efforts.

### ***Mitigation Tips***

Below are some mitigation tips that voluntary agencies should share with their broader communities.

- Remove all debris from culverts, streams, and channels to allow the free flow of potential floodwaters.
- Ensure the safety of critical public records. Remove vital records from basement storage areas.
- Adopt policies now that will ensure that if flood destruction does occur, community redevelopment plans and actions will minimize future flood losses.
- Use an existing or establish a new coalition of the public and private sectors to orchestrate a community disaster mitigation day. Partner with hardware stores, nurseries, volunteer groups, businesses, and others to carry out risk reduction actions.
- Ensure that local elected officials and emergency managers fully understand the procedures for obtaining State and Federal assistance in the event of an emergency.
- Ensure that all government agencies have interoperable communications. They should be working on the same frequencies and systems to prevent emergency communications system problems.
- Conduct emergency management exercises before a disaster.
- Communicate with the public before a disaster strikes about what services are available to them through their local, county, and State governments.

***Additional Project Impact Information***

FEMA can provide you and your community with more information about how to become a disaster resistant community. There are many resources available to you. Call FEMA publications at (800) 480-2520 for the following information.

- Project Impact Community Guidebook
- Project Impact video to help you build support in your community and begin to take action
- How-to mitigation tools
- Technical assistance from FEMA personnel
- Prevention and Preparedness Tips for Individuals, Communities, and
- Businesses

You can also access the FEMA website at ***www.fema.gov*** for more information on Project Impact.



## SUMMARY

Voluntary agency collaboration is achieved when organizations work together toward a common goal with the sincere intent of meeting that goal. Voluntary agencies must be willing to meet before, during, and after disasters to discuss ways to best serve those affected by disaster and to avoid duplication of benefits. The end result of consistent coordination is the ability of voluntary agencies, and the community at large, to provide effective and timely relief services to those who have begun their recovery from the effects of disaster.

## **CHECK YOUR MEMORY**

Once you have completed the questions below, check your answers on page E-2.

1. Which of the following is a benefit of effective voluntary agency collaboration?
  - a. Reduced duplication of services
  - b. Reduced fragmentation of services
  - c. Expanded resource capability
  - d. All of the above
2. Which of the following individuals is responsible for providing guidance to the FEMA regional offices and the State-level VOADs on the role of disaster relief voluntary agencies?
  - a. President of NVOAD
  - b. FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaison
  - c. EMI Voluntary Agency Liaison
  - d. State Donations Coordinator
3. What is the preferred donation to voluntary agencies?
  - a. Clothing
  - b. Toys
  - c. Cash
  - d. Furniture
4. The mission of the Donations Coordination Team is to manage unsolicited donated goods and spontaneous volunteers coming into the disaster area.
  - a. True
  - b. False
5. During which emergency management phase does the Resource Coordination Committee/Unmet Needs Committee help voluntary agencies coordinate their services to address the long-term unmet needs of disaster victims?
  - a. Recovery
  - b. Response
  - c. Preparedness
  - d. Mitigation